

Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Emergency Assistance Program (EA)

Fiscal Year 2013, First Quarterly Report

Department of Housing and Community Development

March 22, 2013



Department of Housing and Community Development
EA Legislative Report
Quarter 1, FY 2013

DHCD began implementing Emergency Assistance (EA) reforms during the first quarter of the fiscal year as required by the FY13 budget. This began in July when Massachusetts residency was included among the criteria for EA eligibility. Then, in August, DHCD began using a new Health and Safety (HAS) assessment process to determine if a family applying for EA, “faces a substantial health and safety risk to the family that is likely to result in significant harm should the family remain in such housing situation.” HAS assessments, conducted by Department of Children and Family (DCF) social workers, are designed to help families overcome difficulties in their present housing situation and maximize the availability of safe and healthy alternatives to shelter. Finally, in mid-September, DHCD implemented additional legislatively-mandated changes that revised the reasons for homelessness allowing families to become EA eligible.

During Quarter 1, 2,926 families applied for EA, an 18 percent decrease from the previous quarter, and a 49 percent decrease compared to the first quarter of FY12, when HomeBASE rental assistance was available to families entering EA, which created an incentive for families to apply for shelter in early FY12.

In FY13 Quarter 1, 1,263 families were placed in EA shelter or motels, a decrease of 17 percent from the previous quarter and a 38% decrease compared to Quarter 1 of FY12. Entries into shelter/motels at the beginning of FY12 were lower because most families eligible for EA were opting for HomeBASE instead of shelter. In FY12, Quarter 1, 1,680 families were diverted from shelter with HomeBASE, and most of these families received HomeBASE rental assistance, which was available to families applying for EA from August 2011 through October 2011.

In FY13, HomeBASE household assistance of up to \$4,000 was available to families as an alternative to shelter and up to 32 weeks from the point of EA entry.¹ During Quarter 1, 240 EA eligible families took advantage of this benefit at the “front door” and were diverted from shelter. Assuming these families took the maximum \$4,000 household assistance benefits, their total diversion costs would be \$960,000. However, the cost to shelter each of families would have been \$22,557.² So we estimate that diverting these families with HomeBASE household assistance saved \$4.5 Million.

In Quarter 1, the Boston regional office continued to serve as the entry point for the greatest number of families placed in shelter or motels, 279 families, accounting for 22 percent of all placements, followed by the Brockton office at 12 percent and the Springfield office at 11 percent.

¹ Families who entered EA before FY12 could access HomeBASE household assistance any time up to 32 weeks after July 1, 2012.

² Average shelter costs are based on an average length of stay of 229 days at a daily rate of \$98.50.

Of those families entering shelter or motels during the quarter, 25 percent were homeless due to eviction. Another 24 percent of entries were in situations that posed health and safety risks compared to only 12 percent in FY12 (based on annual entries into shelter/motels and HomeBASE). In Quarter 1, families who were homeless because they were “asked to leave” or “overcrowded” represented 18 percent and 15 percent of entries respectively, compared to 25 percent and 24 percent in FY12. The drop in the percentage of entrants who were asked to leave or overcrowded and the concomitant increase in the percentage of families entering with a health and safety risk reflect FY eligibility changes that limited EA entry to those families to who could demonstrate that their housing situation posed substantial health and safety risk.

To accommodate demand for EA beyond DHCD’s 2,023 contracted shelter units, the Department continued to rely on motels. During Quarter 1, there was a daily average caseload of 1,723 families in motels representing 46 percent of the total number of families in EA. As FY13 reforms were just starting to take effect and FY13 housing vouchers were not yet issued, this translated to a 5.2 percent total EA caseload increase from the previous quarter.

During Quarter 1, 1,098 families exited the EA system. 216 of these families (20%) exited shelter or motel with HomeBASE household assistance.

EA Applications and Entries

All Applications	SFY 2013 Quarter 1	Previous Quarter	SFY 2013			SFY 2013 Year to Date
			Jul	Aug	Sep	
Families Applying to EA	2,926	3,557	1,135	950	841	2,926
Families Entering EA Shelter or HomeBASE	1,503	1,669	635	503	365	1,503
Families Entering EA Shelter	1,263	1,514	558	433	272	1,263
% of EA Eligible Entering Shelter	84%	91%	88%	86%	75%	84%
Families Entering HomeBASE	240	155	77	70	93	240
% of Eligible Entering HB	16%	9%	12%	14%	25%	16%

Source: DHCD Placement Unit Daily Entry Data and HomeBASE Daily Tally Master.

EA Health & Safety Assessments

	SYF 2013 Quarter 1	Previous Quarter	SFY 2013			SFY2013 Year to Date
			July	Aug	Sept	
H&S Assessment Referrals to DCF	785	1234	459	207	119	785
Families Determined at Risk	576	994	365	124	87	576
% Referrals at Risk	73%	81%	80%	60%	73%	73%
Shelter Diversions	209	240	94	83	32	209
% Referrals Diverted	27%	19%	20%	40%	27%	27%

Source: DCF Monthly Homeless H&S Assessment Reports.

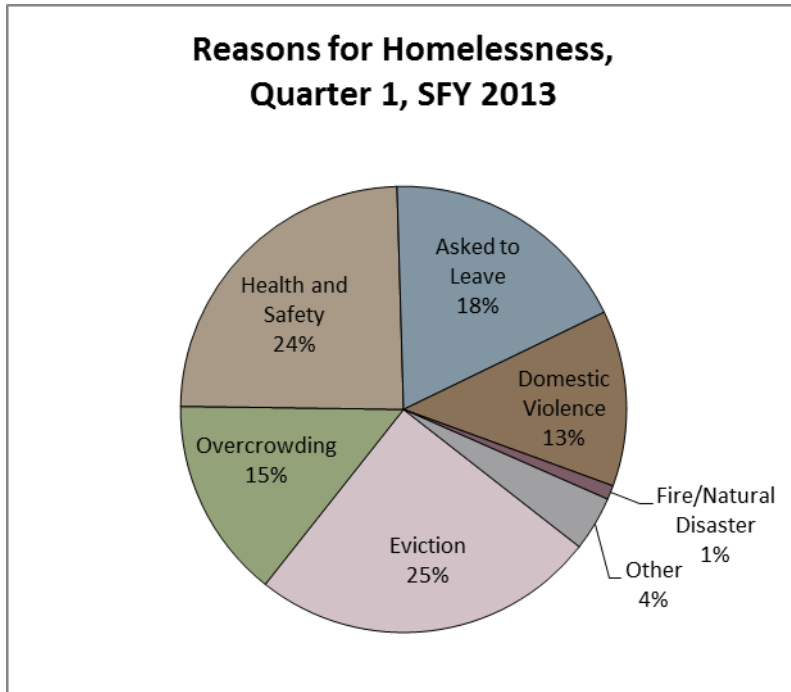
EA Shelter Entries by Region Quarter 1, SFY13

Regional Office	# Families Entering EA Shelter	% Entering Shelter
Boston	279	22%
Brockton	150	12%
Fall River	23	2%
Fitchburg	8	1%
Framingham	35	3%
Greenfield	11	1%
Holyoke	77	6%
Hyannis	16	1%
Lawrence	81	6%
Lowell	91	7%
Malden	56	4%
New Bedford	28	2%
North Shore (Salem)	95	8%
Pittsfield/North Adams	2	<1%
Plymouth	9	1%
Revere	83	7%
Southbridge	4	<1%
Springfield	145	11%
Taunton	13	1%
Worcester	57	5%
Total	1,263	100%

Source: DHCD Placement Unit Daily Entry Data.

Reason for Homelessness, Families Entering Shelter/Motels

EA Entry Reasons	SFY 2013 Quarter 1	Previous Quarter	Quarter 1, SFY 2013			SFY 2013 Year to Date
			Jul	Aug	Sep	
Eviction	317	263	123	120	74	317
Overcrowding	184	321	125	56	3	184
Health and Safety	307	256	96	98	113	307
Asked to Leave	231	427	148	73	110	231
Domestic Violence	161	165	52	58	51	161
Fire/Natural Disaster	13	16	4	6	3	13
Other	50	66	10	22	18	50
Total	1,263	1,514	558	433	272	1,263



Note: Data indicate EA Shelter/Motel entries during the quarter.

Source: DHCD Monthly Management Reports.

Shelter Exits

	SFY 2013 Quarter 1	SFY 2013			SFY 2013
		July	Aug	Sept	Year to Date
Total Shelter/Motel Exits	1,098	497	348	253	1,098
Exiting Shelter/Motels with HomeBASE	216	37	77	102	216
% Exiting with HomeBASE	20%	7%	22%	40%	20%

Shelter Costs

Daily Utilization by Shelter Type	Quarter 1 SFY 2013 Daily Usage	% of Total Daily Usage	Contracted Units	Quarter 1 Average LOS	Average Daily Rate	Quarter 1 Average Cost Per Family
Shelter (Congregate and Scattered)	2,023	54%	2,023	255	\$117	\$29,835
Motel	1,723	46%	.	150	\$80	\$12,000
All Families	3,746	100%	2,022			
Difference from Previous Quarter	185					
% Change from Previous Quarter	5.2%					

Notes:

Shelter utilization is the daily number of contracted units.

Motel usage data indicate the average daily number of EA families staying in motels during the quarter.

Average length of stay was calculated using length of stay for families who exited shelter during the quarter and families who were still in shelters at the end of the quarter.

Sources: DHCD Management Report, DCHD Daily Entry Data, and BEACON Data Warehouse.

Shelter Diversion Costs and Savings

	Quarter 1 Families Diverted with HomeBASE Household Assistance	Diversion Cost Per Family	Quarter 1 Total Diversion Cost	Average Shelter Cost Per Family	Quarter 1 Savings
Shelter Diversions	240	\$4,000	\$960,000	\$22,557	\$4,453,560

Notes:

Diversion costs assume that all families receiving Household Assistance use the maximum \$4,000 benefit.

Average shelter costs are based on an EA average length of stay of 229 days at a daily rate of \$98.5 per day.

Housing Status of Families Receiving HomeBASE Rental Assistance

HomeBASE Rental Assistance Housing Status	# of Families	% of HB Families
Total Families Receiving HB Rental Assistance in FY12	7,201	100%
Families Still Receiving Rental Assistance	6,469	90%
Families No Longer Receiving Rental Assistance	732	10%
Moved Out of State	218	3%
Violated Program/Lease Requirement or Fraud	215	3%
Left the Program	39	1%
Moved to Subsidized Housing	33	< 1%
Is No Longer Eligible	28	< 1%
Chose Not to Recertify	23	< 1%
Evicted	22	< 1%
Other	154	2%

Note: Data indicates families still receiving HomeBASE rental assistance through December 4, 2012.

Source: DHCD, TRACKER database.